

USAWC STRATEGY RESEARCH PROJECT

**WAR AGAINST TERRORISM: MALAYSIA'S
EXPERIENCE IN DEFEATING TERRORISM**

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ABSTRACT

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The September 11, 2001 attack has caused a lot of worries world wide of what transnational terrorism is capable of. There grew great emotions against terrorism rather than uncovering the root causes of terrorism. This resulted in countries (believed to be sponsoring transnational terrorism) being attacked even at the lost of lives of the people, both combatants and civilians alike.

The paper aims at examining the Malaysian success in defeating communist terrorists from 1948 until 1960 (1st Emergency) and 1960-1989 (2nd Emergency), their surrender and the demise of communist ideology in the country. It also looks into the definition of 'terrorism' that have always remained ambiguous, strategy of terrorism, its root causes, Malaysia's experience in defeating the communist terrorists that incorporated the dimensions of national power and how Malaysia copes with the present day terrorism.

It is obvious that Malaysia lacks the 'state of the art technologies' existed in many developed countries, but the employment of 'Human Intelligence' has successfully contributed to defeating the terrorists in the country.

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WAR AGAINST TERRORISM: MALAYSIA'S EXPERIENCE IN DEFEATING TERRORISM

"Like a thunderbolt out of a clear blue sky, the attacks of September 11, 2001 instantly transformed the atmosphere of international politics and, more particularly, strategic assumptions about the likely nature and diplomatic repercussions of asymmetric hostilities."¹ It has given the acts of terrorism an entirely new dimension. The greatest challenge that the world faces now "has come from a non-state actor, the al-Qaeda terrorist group."² Nobody in their normal frame of mind would have thought that the act of terrorism would be so bold and ingenious as to attack the World Trade Center and the Pentagon and above all, the homeland of the United States of America. In the eyes of the terrorists, these were greatest achievements ever undertaken. The ingenuity of its modus operandi took everybody in security organizations by surprise. Historically, terrorism was more of a domestic issue experienced by other countries in the world but now it is transnationalized.

Terrorism in Malaysia began with the declaration of the Malayan Emergency (1948-1960) by the British. This was a response to the "insurgent movement launched by the Malayan Communist Party (MCP), whose guerrilla forces were labeled communist terrorists or CTs".³ Though the MCP was legalized by the British of all of its political activities, the proposal to establish the Federation Of Malaya in 1947 was rejected by the MCP. They believed that the British wanted to manipulate and exclude them from the independence process. The MCP leader Chin Peng, who later advocated "an immediate armed revolt."⁴ The Emergency was declared against the MCP two days after the murders of three British rubber planters in June 1948. The MCP, with a strength of between 10,000 to 20,000 guerrillas, who killed civilians indiscriminately in order to cripple the smooth running of the British administration.

The British realized that it would take more than just the use of military means to defeat the MCP. It would have to be a joint effort between the military and the civil authorities. The military, apart from combating the guerrillas, was also tasked to protect the civilian population from the atrocities of these guerrillas. This task brought about the most significant military-civil-initiative known as the Briggs Plan, that was the massive resettlement of the population to the more secure new villages. Malaya then achieved its independence on 31 August 1957 and by 1960, the Emergency was practically over with only the remnants of the guerrillas taking refuge in secluded areas near the southern border of Thailand. The end of Malayan Emergency was finally declared in July 1960. Malaysia, "consisting of the Federation of Malaya, the State of Singapore and the colonies of North Borneo (now Sabah) and Sarawak was formed on September 1963."⁵

The tasks of combating the remnants of the MCP was far from over. The objective of the MCP during the Emergency was to maintain the legitimacy of MCP. From 1960 thereafter, the objective was shifted to promoting communist ideology in the country. The MCP and later known as the Communist Party Of Malaya (CPM), was supported by the Peoples' Republic of China (PRC) and the Union Of the Soviet Socialist Republic (USSR). This has formed a more complex situation when the ideology was supported by other nation states. However, Malaysia's advocacy of the military-civil initiatives and experience of the past, the successful application of the four elements of national power and the close cooperation with its immediate neighbors managed to put to rest a major threat by the CPM when the party surrendered unconditionally on December 2, 1989. Malaysia's rapid economy recovery has also defeated the CPM when it "failed to gain power or influence through its moderate policy of economic sabotage and racial unrest."⁶

However, Malaysia's social structure and diversity remain fragile and an appealing instability factor of the country. The government has been working hard at getting the various member political parties of the coalition government to ensure racial integration and social harmony. In a unique social structure like Malaysia, the people need to be reminded that "Malaysia is a multi-racial country and that the Malaysian Chinese are Buddhist, Indians are Hindus and Malays are Muslims, so we have to live together, we have to work together."⁷

This paper will propose the ways and means to defeat terrorism based on Malaysia's past experience. However, Malaysia also needs to learn the experiences of the other nations. I hope that these could be blended to achieve positive results in combating transnational terrorism. The discussion will further look into the probable courses of actions the Malaysian Government should take. These include improved intelligence sharing, handling the delicate nature of religious based terrorism, and at the same time, maintaining peace and stability in the country that in a manner is acceptable to the region and the world.

DEFINITION

Terrorism is a very ambiguous word and according to editor Lawrence Howard in his book *Terrorism: Roots, Impacts and Responses*, it is "a politically and emotionally loaded subject and the term is applied indiscriminately to all sorts of acts of violence."⁸ The *Oxford English Dictionary*, defines it as "attempts to further one's views by a system of coercive intimidations."⁹ The *World Book Dictionary* on the other hand defines it more broadly such as: (a) act of terrorizing, especially the systematic use of terror by a government or other authority against a particular person or groups; (b) a condition of fear and submission produced the use of terror;

and (c) a method of opposing a government internally through the use of terror. In broad terms, "terrorism is the use of violence to further a political or social cause"¹⁰ against non-combatants or the ruling government, a distinctive difference from war. As claimed by the author Cindy C. Combs in her book *Terrorism In The Twenty-First Century*, today's terrorism has been "deliberately aimed against non-combatants, unarmed third parties whose well-being can be expected to evoke a desired response from the opposition or from the 'audience' watching the event throughout the world."¹¹

In the case of Malaysia, the term 'terrorism' has been the legacy of its former British colonial masters. The Government of Malaysia defines terrorism as "the illegitimacy of the act that lies in the act itself and does not distinguish between whomever its executors are – whether individuals, sub-nationals groups or sovereign state entities."¹² The term 'illegitimacy or illegitimate acts' are those that are deemed detrimental to the peace and security and in violation of the Constitution of Malaysia. Malaysia believes that there must be consistency in the war against terrorism regardless of religion, race or creed or whatever their perpetrators believed the causes are.

STRATEGY OF TERRORISM

Terrorists may employ various strategies in achieving their ends namely; targeting the population and the factor of time. In fact, "terrorism can certainly be a strategy and not merely a tactic or incidental event."¹³ Based on Clausewitzian 'Remarkable Trinity', the population would always present the best target for terrorist propaganda – winning the 'hearts and minds' of the people. Getting the populace support on the side of the terrorists either by terrorist means or by psychological means, will remain key in their agenda. The numerous bombings and killings of the international communities both combatant and especially civilians, are clearly acts to demoralize the will of the population at large.

Terrorists may succeed if given the luxury of time. The more time the government takes to build the necessary infrastructures for the economic and psycho-social well-being of the population, the more time the terrorists have to undermine, counteract and discredit the government capabilities and efforts. It is a battle of the 'will of sustenance – he who sustains, prevails.'

Malaysia managed to use the element of time to its advantage to defeat MCP terrorists. The government intensified its counter-propaganda against that of the terrorists both militarily and psycho-socially. While the military did not give the space for the terrorists to act, the civilian agencies provided the development needed by the population to lead a more secure and

meaningful life. This was the concept of 'Security and Development' or better known as 'SecDev' and the key to winning the populace support. This concept was so successful and managed to hamper the terrorists plans. Construction of road networks, provision of water and electricity to the remote villages and opening up of new lands for agricultural activities for the population were some of the development plans to winning the support of the population.

ROOT CAUSES OF TERRORISM

Terrorism comes in many forms and some of them are beyond comprehension. It is a way for individuals to gain attention to their political struggle internationally and at home. Its variations befit one of the many philosophies of Sun Tzu: "In battle, there are only direct and indirect forces, yet their combinations are limitless and beyond comprehension. For these two forces are mutually reproductive; their interactions are endless like those of interlocking rings. Indeed, who can tell where the variations begin and end."¹⁴ This philosophy bears testimony to the asymmetric approaches undertaken by terrorists. The threats are "amorphous, changing forms and tactics frequently seek to increase lethality as they attack states at their weakest."¹⁵ As the September 11 attacks horribly demonstrated, "the wars of the future will likely contain no front lines, and America's foes will make little distinction between combatant and civilian."¹⁶ It is a difficult task to distinguish and to identify terrorists as they range from a variety of race, religious background as well as creed and color. Terrorism has created a fear in the general population who do not know when the next terrorist strike will take place. According to James Outman in his book *Terrorism Almanac*, "terrorist groups fall into six main categories:"¹⁷

- National or ethnic independence movements.
- Political-economic warfare.
- State-sponsored terrorism.
- Social causes.
- Individuals with grievances.
- Religion.

In Malaysia, the MCP struggle had been centered around nationalism, politics, social inequality as well as state sponsored ideology (PRC and USSR). The Malaysian government rejected the idea of communist rule, believing that it would not help the country to prosper economically, and would hamper the objective of uplifting the livelihood of the general population. The CPM wanted to be accepted as one of the legitimized political parties so that

it could partake in the country's general elections. However, it failed to convince the government. The CPM was banned and thus, resorted to terrorist acts. The Malaysian Government identified that the basic needs of the general population must be fulfilled to ensure that: (a) they were not easily influenced by the CPM; and (2) the issue would not further lead to other social and individual grievances. Whatever the situation is, "no cause justifies terror."¹⁸

Malaysia also realized that it needs to have a strong system of government. Most terrorist organizations are found in countries that have weak and unstable government or failed states. Weaker states are havens for terrorists. These states become easier targets, easily influenced and enable the terrorists to promote terrorism. Terrorism will have little or no support at all from a country that has a strong and stabilized form of government. Malaysia continued to run the country based on the British type of administration prior to Malaysia's independence. The new administration was able to continue running the country though there were a lot of problems. It also realized that it was necessary to prove to the population that there was nothing the terrorists could bring that the government could not provide for. This placed the government on the upper hand it needed to stay ahead of the terrorists. The government remained sensitive over issues such as race, culture, religion and ethnicity and every opportunity was taken to deny the terrorists from exploiting these issues. The government also ensured that the general social system was viewed as stable with the equitable distribution of power and rights, both politically and socially.

MALAYSIA'S EXPERIENCE. A SUCCESSFUL STRATEGY

The parallel strategy of 'Security and Development' was the cornerstone of the success in defeating terrorism in Malaysia. The government believed that security was necessary to ensure development. The fact that the government was able to carry out its program effectively - be it infra-structural development, political stability, racial integration, economic reforms, security operations and 'winning the hearts and minds of the people' was its strength. Above all, "racial harmony and social integration were necessary to counter the appeal of both communism and communalism."¹⁹ The government employed the four guiding elements of national power namely politics, economics, psycho-social policies and security to their fullest extent in gaining populace support, thus the gradual development for the country and the final defeat of terrorism. Malaysia looked at the threats posed by the CPM as opportunities for it to further develop the interests of the nation.

POLITICS

Malaysia is a country that has an “extreme pluralistic society with clear divisions of race, language and religion”²⁰ and must remain stable to execute its development plans. Realizing this, the government injected restrictive reforms and avoided racially based politics. It believed that politics based along racial lines could be very fragile and could lead to social and political instability. At the same time, the “preservation of the Constitution, including the position of the Malay rulers, and the special rights of the Malays (that is, maintenance of Malay political supremacy) and also the legitimate rights of the other races”²¹ must be understood and maintained. The Malays and other indigenous people see themselves as the real rulers and owners of the land. The Chinese and Indians were migrants during the British colonial rule. Thus the Malays expect certain privileges and rights in the country. The racial clash of May 13th, 1969 instigated by the CPM, expedited the efforts for racial integration to ensure national unity and stability. This is crucial in order to exploit the opportunities and resources for national development. The government formulated the fundamental principles of ‘National Unity Pledge’ (Rukunegara) with the aim of instilling racial harmony and social integration. The Pledge is as follows:

- Believe in God (regardless of religion).
- Loyalty to the King and Country.
- Upholding the Constitution.
- Rule of Law.
- Good Behavior and Morality.

Due to the complex nature of Malaysia as “a Federation, with administration at the Federal and State levels as well as the multi racial, religion and cultural composition of the its population, it was considered fortunate to have a comprehensive constitution.”²² Furthermore, its “Constitution is supreme, consisting of fundamental laws, which describe the manner in which the state (nation) is organized administratively and how justice is administered”²³ Being a country that achieves its independence just over four and a half decades ago, Malaysia has a lot to lose from any form of instability. Political instability means lost of foreign direct investment and could give rise to internal security problems such as racial clashes or religious confrontations.

The Chinese communities were closely associated with the communist terrorists as they felt alienated and were not given the right to citizenship status by the ruling British

Administration before the country achieved its independence. The majority of the Chinese formed the CPM support bases, and the terrorists also tried to undermine the Chinese community into the believing that other races were 'second class citizens' by nature of the Constitution. However almost a million Chinese were given citizenship after independence and this led to the participation of the Chinese in the democratic representation of the country. This gradually diminished the support to the communist terrorists as more and more Chinese significantly integrated into the political system.

This socio-political integration serves as a very valuable experience to the country. To ensure a strong political security, Malaysia established a coalition form of government, incorporating the political parties such as the United Malay National Organization (UMNO) – a Malay based political party taking the lead, with the other ethnic based parties like the Malaysian Chinese Association (MCA), the Malaysian Indian Congress (MIC) and many other independent parties to join hands in ensuring political stability in the country. This has been the basis of Malaysia's political successes.

ECONOMY

Communism believes in the "monopoly of all economic activities, the means of production and ownership of all social wealth and property."²⁴ As an alternative, Malaysia encouraged human competition (capitalism) so that the population would remain economically dynamic and robust. This would generate economic activities and thus increased productivity. This would also reduce economic disparities among the races. Though constitutionally the Malays remained entitled to certain rights and privileges, the government would also look into the interests of the other two main races as well as the other minority races. The majority of the Malays are mainly employed in the government services, and a small fraction is involved in both big and small businesses. The Chinese are in the business sector while the Indians are found in small numbers in both the government and business sectors. The country is blessed with all kinds of natural resources both agricultural and raw materials. The government ensures that these resources are used to uplift the livelihood of the population. The economic challenges led to the formulation of two major economic policies: the New Economic Policy (NEP) and the successive National Development Policy (NDP). These two economic policies were drawn to enhance the growth of the domestic development of the population and to improve the economic living standards of the Malay race who were less prosperous than the Chinese. The surrender of the CPM has given the opportunity for Malaysia to further pursue its economic development strategy. In 1991, Malaysia formulated 'Vision 2020' set at maintaining

the pace for the country to be a fully developed country by the year 2020. The "Vision includes:"²⁵

- The eradication of hard core poverty and the reduction relative poverty.
- The rapid development of and effective Bumiputera Commercial and Industrial Community (BCIC) to heighten their participation in the modern sector of economy.
- The creation of opportunities for growth of private sectors to effect their increased involvement in the government restructuring objective.
- Focus on development of human resources in order to achieve the projected economic growth and desired wealth distribution.

The CPM realized that the government had the upper hand. There were rapid economic developments. Its growth along with political stability, has encouraged foreign direct investment. The government in turn, made use of these economic successes to further develop the nation, attract more investment and provide more job opportunities to the population. The government managed to provide the essence of a secured and improved livelihood for the population. This has further distanced the general population from the CPM and eventually diminishing the populace support to their cause.

PSYCHO-SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

The government has also strived toward improving the psycho-social being of the general population. Factors such as languages, religions and cultural practices need to be integrated in order to gradually improve their well being. The two main approaches undertaken by the government to maintain the good and strong racial integration socio-culturally are; (a) through the Department of National Unity with its concerted plans and programs and (b) the ongoing policies and directives from various government ministries in conformation with the objective of the National Development Policy (NDP). Job opportunities, education, schools, healthcare, better road networks and village civil halls are some of the benefits provided by the government to improve the psycho-social dimension of the population. Village Civil Halls gave the opportunities to the people to organize goodwill social and cultural events as well as educational activities. The government also emphasized on improving the livelihood of the poor, and those living in the rural areas as they have been easy targets of the communist terrorists. The government hopes that this will lead to a stronger and more dynamic social integration among Malaysian.

The National Unity Pledge (Rukunegara) has also provided the foundation of how the population should live and work together in achieving the vision of the country. It has also provided the direction for the population to be more understanding, respectful, tolerant and to share the common values among them. This contradicts with the communist theory of social revolution that believes in one dominant culture. The other setback that brushes aside communism was the strong religious beliefs of the population while communism advocates that "there is no Creator and no God."²⁶

The ability of the government to harness the psycho-social dimension and at the same time, to convince the population to reject the racial inequality issue by the communist terrorists was a major victory on the part of the government. It has managed to reduce the unnecessary racial tension from being exploited by the CPM.

SECURITY

To ensure Malaysia remains internally secure, in 1985 the government adopted a concept of "Comprehensive Security, which incorporates political, military, economic, social, cultural and psychological dimensions."²⁷ Under this concept, "the government has placed emphasis on both military capability and strengthening the socio-economic and political basis of national security."²⁸ It must be noted that security is a secondary to development. Security is designed to provide the conducive environment for development as well as for foreign direct investment. Apart from the military, the Royal Malaysian Police (as well as the other para-military bodies) were also engaged in providing security. Parts of the government's development projects were undertaken by the security agencies as part of their roles in 'nation building' and also winning the 'hearts and minds' of the population, especially in the remote areas.

The concept of the 'Security Executive Committee' was created at the various levels from the district to the national level, have also proven to be very successful. At the district level, 'citizen's watch' concept was implemented to assist and inform the authorities of any abnormalities that happen around the district. The population serves 'the ears and eyes' for the government that indirectly sent a message out that security is everybody's business. This 'local intelligence network' was very effective. According to Dato' Mohamed Jawhar Hassan, a third discussant in A CSCAP Roundtable Discussion said that "Malaysia is reasonably good at human intelligence and is supported by an equally capable law enforcement sector."²⁹

The concept made it more difficult for the terrorists to expand their network especially in recruiting for new members. Trust between the people and the security forces became

essential and has created fear within the terrorist organization. As a result, their propaganda efforts and other activities were jeopardized.

MALAYSIA'S EFFORT TO COUNTER THE 'PRESENT DAY TERRORISM'

In the War On Terrorism, Malaysia realizes that "equity and justice; in educating awareness and tolerance in diversity; in rebuilding shattered lives and communities; and in helping Third World economies to encourage active participation, and consequently wealth-creation, in a competitive global economy which seeks to prosper and not oppress its players"³⁰ will reduce, if not defeat, terrorism. "Terrorism is as old as conflict but modern terrorism has its roots in the Enlightenment."³¹ It changes in "forms and ideology"³² and "provides the basis for today's experience with international terrorism."³³ However, terrorists today are as highly educated as those trying to defeat them. Terrorist groups with the capability of launching weapons of mass destruction (WMD) and cyber technology (information warfare) are of grave concern to the world at large. As such, "inaction is not an option."³⁴ The threats of attack by "cyber – terrorism and chemical, biological, radioactive or nuclear (CBRN) means are threats with relatively low probabilities, but if an event or incident occurs, its impact will be high."³⁵

Terrorism in Malaysia in the 1970s and 1980s was more confined to the jungle. Urban terrorism was rare except for isolated mortar attacks on the military air bases that resulted in failures than successes (the use of defected mortar bombs), assassination of senior police officers and extortion. The other factor is that the ideology of communism, which many believed, has ceased to exist. With the disintegration of the former the Union Of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) into the Commonwealth Independent States (CIS), and the Peoples' Republic of China opening itself up toward a possible democracy, it is difficult to see for any re-emergence of communism ideology. However, in a world that is full of volatility, uncertainties, complex and ambiguous (VUCA), it is difficult to assume anything.

Therefore, how best can Malaysia use its past experience to overcome the present day transnational terrorism? Malaysia claims itself to be an Islamic country and Islam as the official religion. To say that Malaysia can handle the transnational terrorism alone is quite impossible but as a collective effort with other countries, it could prove fruitful. Standing alone, Malaysia must understand that the fragility and diversity of the religious and social structures are potentialities for instability. Efforts must be maintained to ensure that a strong government and racial integration remain intact to facilitate and accommodate further development for the nation. However, these are sensitive issues that if not handled accordingly, could give rise to terrorism.

INTERNAL SECURITY ACT

Internal security in Malaysia has been based in the Legislative Acts, that is, the Internal Security Act and the Sedition Act. The Internal Security Act (ISA), "legislated in the country in 1960"³⁶ has been reviewed 20 times in refining its ultimate objectives. Basically, "the Act covers the followings."³⁷

- That any police officer, without warrant, may arrest and detain anyone he/she has "reason to believe" has acted or likely to act in "any manner prejudicial to the security of Malaysia".
- The Act also allows for restrictions on freedom of assembly, association, and expression, freedom of movement, residence and employment.
- The authorities may initially detain a suspect for sixty days in solitary confinement.
- During this period the authorities may deny the suspect access to lawyers or relatives.
- On approval of the Home Affairs Minister, suspects can be detained for up to 2 years without trial.
- The ISA can be applied on the assumption of the possibility of future crime.
- Schools and educational establishments can be closed if they are used as meeting places for unlawful organizations of for reasons deemed detrimental to the interest of Malaysia or the public.

SEDITION ACT

Though rarely used but the Sedition Act of 1948 was widened after the 1969 riots (racial clashes) to cover matters with "a tendency to promote feelings of ill-will and hostility between the different races."³⁸ "The questioning of citizenship provisions for non-Malays, language provisions and the special position of the indigenous people and of the Malay rulers as enshrined in the Constitution is strictly forbidden."³⁹ The Sedition Act has always been at the forefront for racial related issues and provided a conducive environment for the National Unity Department to enhance further the various plans and programs towards a more cohesive racial integration.

These Acts have received a lot of criticisms in that they could be used arbitrarily by the government for political gains and also seen as a violation to human rights. These Acts have restricted the civil liberties of individuals and are not truly democratic. Contrary to those assertions, the government believes that these are key to maintaining internal security that has brought about rapid development to the country. It is these two controversial Acts that have

provided the politic, economic and psycho-social conducive environment for development. Many countries have similar Acts, only to be named differently. The existence of the Acts will be seen to remain for many more years to come and something that Malaysia cannot live without.

FUNDAMENTALIST RELIGIOUS GROUPS/MOVEMENTS

According to Maria A. Ressa, the author of the book *Seeds Of Terror – An Eyewitness Account Of Al-Qaeda's Newest Center Of Operations In Southeast Asia*, "Malaysia has a Muslim extremist movement that operates at many levels, not only at the electoral arena."⁴⁰ The country is also not spared the potential threats posed by the radical Islamist groups. For most parts, Islam in Malaysia is that practiced by the moderate Sunni sect, which does not pose any imminent threat that the country will be taken over by a fundamentalist Muslim regime in the immediate future. However, the "worldwide resurgence of Islam has resulted in the increase of Islamization which is accompanied by politicization and, it is evident that extremist elements are prepared to use force to realize their aims."⁴¹ The rise of the radical Islamists is already threatening the fragile racial and social structures of the Malaysian population. The former Prime Minister of Malaysia Dr. Mahathir bin Mohamad espouses that "a pragmatic Islam is one that fits his vision of economic growth, development, social stability and ethnic harmony."⁴² In fact, Islam encourages the positive development of its 'ummah' (community). On the other hand, the Islamic Party of Malaysia – PAS (the main opposition political party) has been aggressive. PAS sees secular development as 'unIslamic' and has tried to exploit social issues in order to make Malaysia a fundamentalist Islamic state. However, the present National Front Coalition Government remains modest and defensive in dealing with PAS over issue of Islam. The government tries to avoid an aggressive confrontation with PAS on the religion issue anticipating that the consequences would be detrimental to both parties, the religion at large and the Muslim community. The Malaysian government also fears that it could lead to "a revolutionary means as in the Iranian Revolution of 1978"⁴³ and could endanger the lives of the general population. The country has already seen some of the emergence of similar Muslim groups such as the Al-Arqam Sect founded in 1968 (and finally banned in 1994) and the numerous arrests of the members of the militant groups known as the Al-Ma'unah as well as the Kumpulan Mujahideen Malaysia (KMM), that is also linked to the Al-Qaeda.

The consequence of Sept 11 attack has made Malaysia to be more concerned over the various religious activities held in the country. The government took domestic measures by "ceasing education assistance to 500 Islamic religious schools found using religion to

propagate anti-government sentiment, militancy ideology as well as ill-equipping the students to meet the modern society.”⁴⁴ Education in the country is a federal affair and all schools are compelled to conform to the curricula set by the Education Ministry. The only Islamic religious schools found in Malaysia would be those supervised by the Religious Department of the Ministry of Education. The various government agencies have also been tasked to monitor closely the movements of suspected individuals and groups of their activities in the country as well as Malaysian students studying at religious institutions overseas, particularly in Pakistan. Education scholarships awarded to students would also be withdrawn if they are found to have violated the directives of the government.

SHARING OF INTELLIGENCE AND EXPERTISE

According to The Honorable Dato’ Seri Abdullah Haji Ahmad Badawi, the Deputy Prime Minister of Malaysia (now Malaysia’s Prime Minister since 31 Oct 2003) that “Malaysia has cooperated extensively with the US within the framework of the ‘ASEAN-US Joint Declaration For Cooperation To Combat International Terrorism’ to ensure a coordinated response to the security situation in ASEAN region.”⁴⁵ Malaysia has a good track record on human intelligence (HUMINT) but lacks ‘state of the art’ intelligence capability. This will result in a disparity if Malaysia needs to work together with US, for example in a joint effort to combat terrorism. This is where Malaysia needs to share its expertise and experiences and learns from the state of the art sources of acquiring intelligence. Malaysia needs to upgrade its intelligence community if it desires to stay ahead in combating terrorism. However, it is worth noting that Malaysia remains comfortable with HUMINT and thus state of the art equipment will remain as enablers. Many countries could learn to enhance their HUMINT capability from Malaysia, including the US. Relying on state of the art equipment alone will not be sufficient. They can provide the data but making timely and correct decisions still rest with the individuals.

The establishment of the Southeast Asia Center For Counter Terrorism in Malaysia is timely and appropriate. The center would be run “like an institute, holding training programs, workshops and seminars to help the region implement antiterrorism measures.”⁴⁶ The center can also be the place to set best practices and share experiences from participants from all over the world.

CONTROL OF THE MEDIA

Malaysia exercises ‘controlled democracy’ which simply means that as much as Malaysia is a democratic nation, the government rigidly stipulates what can be done and said. The media community is not spared this restriction. The government provides the guidelines to the media

community of what can and cannot be reported through the media. The media is used by the government as its informational tool to reach out to the population, reporting successes for the country and reports of the failures and defamation of the opposition party. All these can be seen as the downside of the Malaysian government. Malaysia views the media as a 'double-edged weapon' and thus, must be controlled and exploited to the advantage of the government of the day. There exists the press established by the Opposition Political Party whose main aim is to circulate information and political developments to the members. However, it must refrain itself from publishing sensitive issues that can be detrimental to racial harmony and religious freedom.

Malaysia is a young nation that cannot afford issues that could be detrimental to its development. It has also been the target of criticism in the way it handles the media to avoid the outcomes from being counter-productive. As in any other countries, the media must be made to inform the population of the various programs that the government is undertaking so as to gain their confidence in the government of the day. Malaysia believes that media must be rational and sincere. The people in the media can sometimes lose control in their effort to gain higher ratings among the media community. As such, careful control of the media cannot be over-emphasized on its importance and what they could do to assist the government in maintaining a conducive environment for peace and development.

The Malaysian government has no control over individual accessibility to Internet facility. What it has done is to encourage Internet users to surf those items beneficial to individual development. Due to the lack of freedom of press, much of the criticism against the government are done via Internet.

CONCLUSION

Would the experience that Malaysia has gained during the Emergency Era and the surrender of the CPM on Dec 2nd, 1989 be of consequence in this new dimension of terrorism? Malaysia's experience in defeating communist terrorism was more confined to engaging them in the jungle. They were easily defined and identified. They were discredited over their atrocities and denied of local support and sympathies. Once they lost their credibility, they lost the populace support. Today, terrorism is more urbanized and complex and moves among the general population. Malaysia's lack of state-of-the art technology should not be looked at as the down side in combating terrorism but should be seen as how Malaysia can contribute toward the development of a more effective 'Human Intelligence'.

Malaysia's response to the latest manifestation of terrorism is not only to "act against the potential terrorists, but seek to define terrorism and terrorists so that there is no ambiguity and everyone will be able to fight against them."⁴⁷ Malaysia's experience should not be taken in total but rather examined, improved and implemented when and where it deems fit. Malaysia's strategy in combating terrorism, based on its experience in defeating the communist terrorists has been on "two parallel levels namely; punitive/preventive law enforcement measures and, examination of the root causes of terrorism."⁴⁸ In the country's history, "political causes were an important factor in the country's victory over the communists."⁴⁹

When Malaysia battled the communist terrorists, it was necessary to "demonstrate that Malaysians had a secure life under the government of the day"⁵⁰ and the population had every confidence in the government. What is certain is that at the national level, the government must win 'the hearts and minds of its people' while at the international level, it must win the 'hearts and minds of the governments'.

In conclusion, if all the issues such as the fragile social structure (social integration), extremist religious groups, the Internal Security and the Sedition Acts, intelligence sharing and sharing of experiences and expertise as well as the role of the media are not handled diplomatically, there will be dire prospects for political instability. Though Malaysia has been criticized over the existence of the ISA, as a young democratic country it needs all its legislative tools to remain politically and economically stable. A stable Malaysia will neither propagate nor provide a safe haven for terrorism.

WORD COUNT=6,087

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